

# The Benefits of Supporting Home Language

Understanding and speaking in two or more languages is a remarkable skill and provides many benefits to the child, family, school, and society.

Children all over the world engage in the practice of learning two or more languages during the first five years of life. This does not inherently cause confusion or language delays (Espinosa, 2013). As you would expect, though, language development for DLLs looks different from that of monolingual learners.

Learning two or more languages helps children get ready for school and life. Research shows that children who fully develop two or more languages benefit in many ways:

"These are our brightest children. They're brilliant! And if we support them now in developmentally appropriate ways, they'll show us that by 3rd grade."  
~Debb Schaub, Director, Eagle's Wing

<p><b>Social-Emotional Development</b></p> <p>Research shows that children who develop two or more languages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show better self-control</li> <li>• Are likely to maintain strong ties to their family, culture, and community</li> <li>• Are able to make new friends and create strong relationships in their second language</li> </ul>	<p><b>Early Language and Literacy</b></p> <p>Research shows that children who develop two or more languages have an easier time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thinking about language</li> <li>• Learning additional languages</li> <li>• Transferring their knowledge about literacy to their second language</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cognitive Development</b></p> <p>Research shows that children who develop two or more languages have an easier time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing cognitive flexibility</li> <li>• Using logic and thinking skills</li> <li>• Focusing their attention</li> <li>• Understanding math concepts and solving math problems</li> </ul>	<p><b>Approaches to Learning</b></p> <p>Research shows that thinking in two languages promotes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advanced executive function skills such as planning, initiating, waiting, and self-regulation</li> <li>• Flexible approaches to problem solving higher levels of abstract thought</li> <li>• An openness to learning about and from people from other cultures</li> </ul>

Adapted from: *The Benefits of Being Bilingual*, Office of Head Start, Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC), <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/docs/benefits-of-being-bilingual.pdf>

## Connecting with Families

A literature review by Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp (2002) concluded that there is a positive relationship between family engagement and children's academic achievement at all ages, regardless of the family's socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, or educational background (Mapp, 2004). Family engagement has been standard practice in early care and education programs. Per the guidelines set forth by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) within *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age Eight* (Bredekamp & Copple, 2009), high-quality early care and education programs go beyond offering "scheduled events" and "parent education" sessions. High-quality programs create a welcoming environment and reciprocal relationships with families. For DLLs, they also encourage and support the use of home language.

